

Ma Vie En Jade

by Jade Wolfe



The Gathering Season

'My initial article was' ... I am turning pages in my ragged pocket notebook and find these four words, which had arrived on the brink of my pen, ready to open my December column. When did I first write down that phrase? Accepting this gift from the 'creative force as a sign of good will, I proceed with more conviction.

We have all been taken beyond our own safety nets these last few months. And, I could not have my last words of this calendar year be too impersonal or theoretical. My initial article was sincere in a gently taunting way. And, sometime in the next year, I may have reason to open it up to you for your own consideration. This time, I can offer you no less than if we were talking. In so doing, there is a lack of completion. I am denied the privilege of listening to what you might say as our words mix and blend into conversation.

Culturally speaking, there was one hell of a volcanic eruption not so many weeks ago. Hardly anyone on this planet did not feel the ripple effect of the initial blast. As I stood frozen in my home, before any cognitive outpouring or physical draining, the core part of me responded. Closing my eyes I reached out embracing those around me. My nearest life connections of family and friends extended out continuing on to all those closest to them, forming a spiral. This felt more primal than my geographical time, more personal than my outer being. These attachments reassured me. I needed to gently, warmly hold those around me. When it flows like this through us, out over the face of the planet, individual pain and loneliness can be eased. 'Pain and alone' ... what a tortuous state. Comforting, healing energies such as love and laughter are not separate from pain and loneliness. As we are able to open up to one another, there is a natural adjustment. Whatever loneliness or pain exists becomes stirred up, balancing out with bits of warmth in moments of light-heartedness.

My image of planetary interconnectedness is not meant as some superficial group hug. An artificial or forced expression of any kind is not helpful or pleasant. Simply, as we gather our loved ones round us ... as we gather round those we love ... the entire community is strengthened. All the ways we touch one another's lives, how seemingly trivial, are equally important. And maybe, as we move from a holiday of thanks, our ability to have gratefulness toward one another will linger past its usual waning time. Trite as this still sounds, life is too short.

For me, this is a gathering season. I wish for you a coming together in gentle spiritedness and 'gathering of hearts'. Whenever possible I promise to let go my vocabularies of causes, interpretations and limitations and wait upon my heart's vision and my spirit's humor. I want to honor our laughter as much as our grieving, respecting the natural timing of the season.

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with the gay community.

The University of California report is the first to assess long-term efforts to integrate gay and lesbian officers into a major urban police force.

"Overall, San Diego's 10-year effort ... has increased trust and cohesion," said Aaron Belkin, director of the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military at the UC Santa Barbara.

Belkin and his team spent five months this year reviewing research about gay police and interviewing people in the department and community. Heterosexual officers had feared that integrating gay and lesbian officers into the ranks would prove divisive. Instead, researchers said teamwork has improved. Police relations with gay and minority residents have also improved.

While some department members remain opposed to homosexuality, anti-gay harassment has been minimal, researchers said.

Salvation Army

SAN FRANCISCO - Salvation Army employees shouldn't expect to get domestic partnership benefits anytime soon.

The national Salvation Army has rescinded a decision by officials of its western territory to offer the unmarried partners of its employees health benefits.

Until November, the evangelical Christian group offered benefits only to married couples and their dependent children. But leaders of the group's Western Territory said Nov. 1 they would also begin offering benefits to all adult members of an employee's household, including straight and gay partners.

Under the national leaders' decision, the Western Territory will follow the same policy as the rest of the group.

"We've been listening to our internal and external constituencies, and we now confirm adherence to biblical principles concerning marriage and the family," said Theresa Whitfield, the Salvation Army's media relations director.

In October, the Salvation Army's commissioners decided to let the four U.S. territories determine their health care policies, and the Western Territory was the only one to expand benefits. Now, the commissioners decided to return health care policymaking to the national level. the victim of "a hate crime, pure and simple."



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